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Bottoms Up With Cheers: Drinking & College Life at SUNY Brockport 1970-1995

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BOTTOMS UP WITH CHEERS

**DRINKING
&
COLLEGE LIFE
at
SUNY BROCKPORT
1970 - 1995**

HST 691

Tom Downs

Summer, 1999

Profs. Bruce Leslie & Ken O'Brien

“Pregame tailgating parties, post-exam celebrations, and Friday happy hours - not to mention fraternity and sorority mixers - have long been a cornerstone of the collegiate experience.” [1] Drinking alcoholic beverages has become almost a “right-of-passage” [2] for college students since the maturation of the “baby boom” generation dating back to the late 1960's. Societal awareness coupled with growing practices of abuse have led to a keener public consciousness concerning the role of alcohol on American college campuses. This writer intends examine this changed consciousness, in conjunction with extensive information available about drinking practices at the State University of New York College at Brockport, to analyze the importance of alcohol consumption by students as an integral part of the college experience.

The issue of alcohol consumption by American college students has not only experienced new heights of public awareness nationwide, it has become an issue of controversy at SUNY Brockport as well.[3] What has this “right of passage” meant to students and to college life at the College since the arrival of the “baby boomers” nearly 30 years ago? If there is one constant surrounding the social life of students at Brockport it is the consumption of alcoholic beverages as a part of participation in many social events. The inclination of Brockport students to continue their drinking practices has been a powerful social force on campus as well as a cause of concern for many who fail to conduct themselves responsibly.

With the awareness that new attitudes and perceptions afford, it is possible to understand the importance of drinking as part of college life at Brockport. Students have engaged in consumption practices at Brockport that are both very important to them personally and have paralleled experiences at other similar colleges and universities throughout the nation.

There are two distinct periods at Brockport during which student’s drinking practices evolved. These two periods cover roughly fifteen years from the beginning of 1970 until late 1985

when the legal drinking age in New York State was eighteen years and alcohol was readily available on campus, and a decade beginning immediately after the legal standard was raised to twenty-one in late 1985 and lasting until 1995.

LEGAL ISSUES, COLLEGE POLICY & STUDENT RESPONSE

During the first period, drinking at Brockport involved virtually the entire College population since the legal age of consumption was eighteen (New York had lowered the legal drinking age to eighteen in 1942) and included all but the very youngest first semester freshmen. This was a period of initially high enrollment and a time in which most students were on-campus residents.[4] It was also a time in which the College administration of President Albert Brown sought to fulfill the wishes and whims of students. As part of this philosophy the College adjusted its policy governing alcohol to permit on-campus availability of legal beverages. The opening of the Rathskeller in the basement of the Student Union on January 23, 1970, marked the first time that the College “has made alcohol available to all students”[5] and, as such, was a watershed at SUNY Brockport.

The second period (1985-95) is characterized by rebellion, cooperation, and rebellion once again. The rebellious attitude surrounding alcohol consumption had its roots during the final months of the first period. As State lawmakers debated the merits of increasing the legal drinking age to twenty-one years, students from Brockport joined those from other SUNY campuses in protesting the potential change. Some representatives saw it as “a violation of student rights that penalizes the majority because of the sins of the minority”. [6]

The preliminary opposition at Brockport transcended the traditional protest to include a “new underground effort to produce and sell fake ID to enable students to beat the expected state change”. [7]

Despite opposition and objections from students statewide, the New York Legislature went forward passing a new twenty-one year age drinking minimum that would take effect December 1, 1985. The College, which had first implemented an alcohol policy in 1967 that permitted legal consumption standards for eighteen year olds, now had to scamper to revise rules to remain within legal mandates.

As the inevitability of the new requirement approached, there was a shift in student attitudes on campus to a spirit of creative anticipation. Instead of continuing their futile opposition to the impending change, student leaders began promoting alternative social events to supplant activities that formerly featured alcoholic beverages. The student newspaper, The Stylus, featured numerous stories about alternative events that enabled students to avoid the temptation of illegal drinking by those who now found themselves to be underage.

This cooperative spirit by Brockport students to participate in non-alcoholic social events lasted less than three years as student attendance at activities declined by late 1988, “in favor of heading for the downtown bars and nightclubs”. [8] Once again illegal drinking was on the increase as underage students gained and utilized fake ID cards. This pattern of illegal drinking continued until the end of the decade and well into the 1990s. The desire and importance of drinking caused many students to flout both College policy and State law.

COLLEGE LIFE & DRINKING, 1970 - 1985

Alcohol is a mood altering substance. It is, therefore, as important to recognize the setting in which it is consumed as it is to observe the impact that drinking has on those who engage in it. This is not to create excuses for any conduct, but rather, to afford a more complete analysis of all issues that went with drinking at Brockport.

The eighth decade of the twentieth century was ushered in during the most tumultuous period of history in American higher education. The seeming chaos resulted from massive resistance by college students to the war in Vietnam. During the last two years of the 1960's, there had been numerous demonstrations against the war on college campuses including protests, rallies and occupations of administration buildings to display displeasure and opposition to the war.

SUNY Brockport students encountered some of the same conditions that students around the nation found antagonistic. Amidst the tumult of antiwar sentiment there were further concerns which affected students at Brockport. Barely five years into the administration of President Albert Brown, SUNY Brockport was bulging at the seams with enrollment that exceeded the school's physical capacity. Dormitory rooms intended for single or double occupancy were being used as triples. Classrooms and class sizes were exceeding intended capacity, thereby making students feel that they were nothing more than numbers in a big educational system.

One thing which didn't change at this time was the legal drinking age in New York State. In 1942, during World War II, the State reduced the legal age to eighteen years to afford "servicemen the opportunity to enjoy themselves during leave time". [9] Twenty-eight years later, amidst another war, eighteen year old youths were still able to 'enjoy themselves' whether or not they were servicemen. The opportunity to drink was available to nearly all college students since only the youngest of freshmen had yet to reach the milestone birthday.

The opening of the Rathskeller in the basement of the Student Union on January 23, 1970, meant that “Brockport is among the few campuses in New York State to serve both liquor and beer on campus to its students”. The bar, in the basement of the union in space originally planned for a bowling alley, can accommodate 250 patrons”[10] Despite the large capacity to serve patrons, the Rathskeller experienced overcrowding upon its opening with students lined up outside the doors every weekend waiting for the chance to get inside the new ‘in place’. This demand to drink on campus was more than just a desire by students to experience something new. The opening of “The Rat” came at the beginning of spring semester in the midst of bitter winter weather. For the first time, students had access to drinks on campus and did not have to endure the cold walk to the downtown bars in the Village of Brockport.

After the novelty of the new bar began to wane, the convenience still kept patrons coming back for more. The on-campus facility meant that one of the most chronic complaints of local village residents, that of rowdy drinkers returning from downtown bars, were reduced.

Brockport and its state school have long had a relationship similar to many other college towns throughout the country. There has existed a certain hostility between local residents and students. While residents are concerned with maintaining a way of life and raising families, students are often little more than transients staying four years to complete their formal education. The different purposes and the resultant conduct has frequently fostered animosity between the two groups. Brockport students in 1970 were keenly aware of these conflicting attitudes.

A *Stylus* student survey the previous fall to the question “do you feel welcome in the village of Brockport ?” brought a resounding “no” from 57% of students surveyed. [11] The noise and disregard for residents by some students returning from village bars during early morning hours was clearly a major source of friction.

The Rathskeller had a positive influence on smoothing some of the ill feelings by affording students the opportunity to drink, socialize, and enjoy themselves on campus and keep them off the streets of the village. Many students were appreciative of the Rat and the setting it offered.

“Up till now we had to wait for a beer blast to drink socially on campus,” [12]

The Rat seemed like the ideal solution to mitigate problems surrounding student drinking. It offered social drinking without having to make the long hike into town, it kept rowdy drinkers off village streets and away from problems with residents, and it offered an opportunity for some college control of the persistent problems that go along with excessive drinking. Rathskeller manager Doug Stokes was adamant that “No monkey business will be tolerated, people will be dismissed from the bar”. [13]

Not everyone was happy with the new establishment, however. Two months after the opening of the Rat, village tavern owners were surveyed to determine the impact on their business. Joseph Barber, owner of Barber’s Tavern, claimed “We’ve catered to these kids for a good many years, and all at once we’re just left out in the cold. We are the ones that are paying the shot for these taxes to support state schools. We are just left out in the cold.” [14] Tavern owner Bruce Dill of Higgin’s Grill was more specific claiming that “Business has gone down 60%.” [15] Still another bar owner who requested anonymity, proclaimed “That bar on campus serves them until 11 o’clock, then the rowdies head down here for more and to raise hell.”[16] Apparently on-campus drinking neither suited everyone nor solved all the problems that can go along with it.

A *Stylus* article in the fall of 1970 encouraged students to “go out and experience the variety of night spots and drinking establishments around town”. [17] The article highlighted the atmosphere that students could expect at each establishment. “The new nightclub in town, the Attic, features live music and dancing five nights a week. For quieter atmosphere for the hippie

set try Barber's or Higgin's to hear poetry or enjoy the Dylan tunes on the jukebox.”[18]

Students were obviously seeking drinking establishments that suited their moods or attitudes.

The focus on drinking and activities by campus publications clearly demonstrates the importance of drinking in student's lives as well as its significance to campus social life. As a student and then as a campus official as the Director of Educational Opportunity, Terry Barnes recognized the importance of social drinking to many students at SUNY Brockport at the time.

Drinking was a major part of college social life at the time. Students took for granted that they would always have the opportunity to meet for a beer or go out to a night club. People would meet after class to unwind or discuss issues, or they would get together for mixers or good times on weekends. Drinking wasn't abused; it was an important way for most students to engage in a social life when they left home for college. [19]

A major event at Brockport for many years was “*Spring In*”, which seemed to be a cause of many celebrations. Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s “*Spring In*” was held annually during late April or early May on the center mall of campus just outside the Student Union. It was a celebration of nice weather, the end of the school year, or any of a multitude of other reasons revelers may declare as justification to party. “*Spring In*” was all those things with loud music, liberation and beer. Sponsored and funded by Brockport Student Government, “*Spring In*” was known for its party atmosphere and beer. A *Stylus* pictorial page on “*Spring In*” showed revelers in line at the Genesee Beer Truck.[20] It was a common practice for the brewery to deliver a special truck to campus each year for the event. The truck had spigots on the side so drinkers could take care of their own refills. In spite of the revelry and drinking that was a major part of the annual ritual at Brockport for many years, there was never an instance of trouble or incident reported in the campus newspaper. There was, however, complaint by those with a more serious academic concern that “*Spring In*” should be moved from the center of campus in order to facilitate a more studious atmosphere. By the end of the 1970's this concern

was accommodated by moving the fest to the south side of campus away from academic buildings.

Early in 1971, Harrison Dining Hall began serving beer and featured regular Saturday night beer blasts. On a March Saturday evening of that year a company of actors performed *Your Father's Moustache* at the Fancher campus for “900 beer drinking freaks. The crowd was raucous helping the performers belt out old songs from the 20's era. Schlitz beer also helped make this an enjoyable alternative to Saturday night beer blasts.”[21]

Less than two years into the decade and the new school alcohol policy, college drinking had risen to new heights on the Brockport campus. It seemed that students were taking advantage of campus offerings and refraining from village disruptions and conflicts. At about this time, new advertisements began appearing in the campus newspaper promoting in-town drinking establishments. Village pubs began promoting drink specials including two for one promotions and afternoon happy hours. Ads for the new nightclub, The Attic, enticed patrons with a flat price all-you-can-drink admission that included live entertainment. Student drinking was becoming more affordable and enticing.

Although it had not yet become a major issue of public consciousness, the issue of alcohol abuse and intoxication was slowly gaining media attention. Articles in both the *Stylus* and the *Brockport Republic-Democrat* of the late 1960's cited traffic accidents where drivers had “just left a local tavern”.[22] By contemporary standards, the link between drinking and driving seems obvious. Yet, at the time there was no mention or hint that drinking may have been responsible for the accidents. During the 1971-72 school year recognition of alcohol's dangerous affects began to appear in the news. An article in the *Stylus* details the death of “a 19 year old sophomore co-ed on Holley Street after being struck by a 23 year old Brockport grad who was charged by police with Driving-While-Intoxicated”. [23] Several months later, there was

another DWI story of the death of a 21 year old co-ed at the intersection of Redman Road and Route 31. The serious consequences of irresponsible drinking were beginning to be presented to SUNY Brockport students.

Whether this awareness had any effect is uncertain, but a new trend seemed to emerge on campus by 1973-74. Student drinking declined while drug use increased. Letters-to-the-editor appeared in the campus paper claiming that there has been “growing clouds of funny-smelling smoke recently in Mortimer Hall”. [24] The *Stylus* even ran an article entitled “A new drug hits Brockport”. The article was about a new synthetic drug named MBT that had not yet caught the attention of law authorities. The article concludes “this drug has been found to be poisonous to vein tissue and, therefore, cannot be taken with a needle. One word of advice: if you want to get this drug get it soon. State legislators intend to make this drug illegal very soon.”[25] The same issue even featured an editorial complaining about a double standard between alcohol and marijuana. Doing drugs and patronizing the campus Coffee House and one on Main Street had become the alternative to drinking. At nearly the same time advertisements in the school paper for alcohol and drinking establishments seemed to disappear. Were the students of Brockport losing their thirst?

The answer was a definite ‘no’ as students began to patronize night clubs, once again, during the ‘disco fever’ of the mid 70’s. By this time, the Rathskeller had been in operation for nearly six years. The revolution in night club atmosphere at off-campus bars brought pressure to bear on management of the campus pub. For the first time since its opening the Rathskeller experienced remodeling and transformation. Instead of the quiet pub atmosphere, the Rat now offered “The Hustle” to go along with its drinking and party atmosphere.

The change was instrumental in “pumping life back into the *Rathskeller*. Patrons display enthusiasm and vigor during their visits; a trait previously unseen in the campus bar. The new

weekend nightclub format has reinvigorated business and excitement alike.” [26] Does increased business and a lively atmosphere necessarily lead to a better college bar, some wondered.

Within a few weeks of the new format disapproval began to surface in the “Letters to the Editor” section of the campus newspaper. Many readers expressed feelings that loud music and eclectic atmosphere ought to be left to the off-campus clubs. Nevertheless, by the following semester, crowds and the lines had increased to record sizes. They also brought with them another milestone for the *Rathskeller*: bar fights. The loud and lively atmosphere seemed to energize tempers among patrons. “Last Saturday evening students drank and partied to excess. The management of the *Rathskeller* sincerely apologizes for any inconvenience or discomfort that this small minority attempted to impose on our responsible and loyal customers.”[27]

The effort to offer students more variety and fun created concern that the Rat had lost sight of its original purpose. Since nightclub entertainment was available at off-campus locations, some contended, “the Rat should stick to what it does best - offer a convenient and quiet atmosphere where students could enjoy a drink and a conversation”. [28] This quest for the right atmosphere as well as a dislike for bar fights, led the management to rescind its weekly disco club by fall semester 1977.

Atmosphere is a cherished element for many in the college community who patronize on-campus pubs. One faculty member commented: “It was common after a late afternoon or evening class to join several students at the *Rathskeller* for a beer or two to discuss ideas or issues. No one ever considered it to be improper. The atmosphere was relaxing and promoted a constructive relationship between students and professors.”[29]

Despite occasional disturbances, students at Brockport demonstrated responsibility where on-campus drinking was concerned. Neither the college residential life office nor campus police

had many reports during the period concerning intoxication or associated problems resulting from on-campus drinking. Perhaps, the reason was concern to avoid ruining 'a good thing'.

The college began publishing its official alcohol policy in the student handbook beginning in 1969. There were six specific rules concerning alcohol on campus. The first was that the rule of law took precedent over all college guidelines. There were also specific requirements that chaperones be present at every activity where alcohol was served. The policy and oversight was under the auspices of The Board of Alcohol Review. By 1974, and lasting throughout the remainder of the 1970's, the student handbook promoted drinking more than the rules that went with it. There was an entire page of the handbook devoted to college drinking at Brockport, without a single mention of any rules or guidelines. "Drinking on campus usually involves a faculty chaperone at your club's activity. He is usually your faculty advisor who is dying to tie a load on and meet Suzy Q as much as you are. Booze in your rooms is no problem, that is, unless your roommate wants to study for his test tomorrow morning." [30] Considering this non-statement of alcohol policy, the lack of reported incidents involving student drinking may have been characteristic of societal attitudes of the time more than good behavior.

By the end of the 1970's reports of incidents where drinking was involved began to fill news reports. By far the greatest of these incidents were automobile accidents where a driver had been drinking. As newspaper accounts of driving-while-intoxicated accidents became more numerous and in response to several personal victimizations a group known as "Mothers Against Drunk Driving" was founded. Initially their purpose was to curb drinking and driving. They used stories of great tragic consequences to gain public attention over the dangers of drinking and driving. "Public sentiment was garnered, lawmakers responded with harsher laws, and the public finally began to see the evils of public intoxication." [31]

The impact of this campaign to educate the public instigated major changes in how American society views alcohol consumption. While DWI was the first, and most important, concern emerging from this new public consciousness, a multitude of other alcohol associated evils were also exposed. Among them were the immediate consequences of alcohol consumption on the human body, involvement in criminal activity, unplanned sexual activity, and a host of other offensive or illegal activities. Public awareness of these evils continued to expand into the 1980's and even until this day.

On the heels of this new public consciousness, college students at Brockport and throughout the nation began to experience changes in policies and laws concerning drinking and intoxication. Statisticians and analysts began to look at the demographics of the issue. What they found was a disproportionate number of young drinkers involved in accidents and other evils of alcohol. The response was predictable and had significant impact on the college age population. When lawmakers addressed the issue of intoxication they not only passed stricter laws regarding drinking and driving, they also looked at the legal drinking age.

In December 1982, the legal drinking age in New York State increased to 19 years of age. As the public consciousness received unending reports concerning the evils of alcohol during this period, there was a sense among members of the college community that even bigger changes were still to come. The *Stylus* became the main sounding board at Brockport concerning changing attitudes and laws.

The first major controversy erupted over the Rathskeller and the administration's new policy that no one under nineteen should be admitted. The BSG responded that this was unfair to younger students since their fees pay for Rat facilities and operations.[32] The changes went even further than admission policies at the Rat. For the first time in over a decade, the college alcohol policy was changed. Recognizing concern over the entire intoxication issue, the college

prohibited kegs and other multiple containers on campus. There were also changes regarding campus events where alcohol was served. No longer would an entry fee entitle students to unlimited numbers of drinks.[33]

Perhaps the potential of losing a privilege long taken for granted caused people to look upon things in a different light. During the early 1980's the government, the public, and the college administration all reevaluated issues and policies relevant to alcohol consumption.

With impending changes facing Brockport, students appreciation for responsible social drinking became a campus cause. The *Stylus* began a new weekly column in February, 1983 called "The Bar Review". Each week a different local bar or restaurant was reviewed. Drink offerings were only part of the reviews. Atmosphere, food, and activities were also a main part of the review to let students realize that other enjoyable events went with drinking and that "intoxication should not be the main purpose of drinking". [33] The "Bar Reviews" continued weekly for the remainder of the 1983-84 academic year and became a monthly feature the following year.

Responsible drinking became an overt cause on campus during this period. February 23 -27, 1983, became the first DWI (drinking with intelligence) week at Brockport. Activities were planned to promote awareness of the dangers of alcohol. An "Alcohol Bowl" was planned with the format following the popular "College Bowl" game show. There was an "Alcohol Fair" in the student union. Clearly, drinking, and how to preserve the right, was an issue on the minds of many college students of the time. The dynamics of college social life were tied to the issue.

Students returned to campus in the fall of 1983 amidst calls by Governor Mario Cuomo to raise the drinking age to twenty-one. At the same time, there were increased complaints by Village of Brockport residents concerning student noise by those returning from the bars during late night hours. "The complaints are not limited exclusively to noisy students. They also include reports of vandalism, littering, urinating and trespassing on private property." [35]

As public awareness of alcohol issues increased, analytical studies reached print exposing the detrimental affects of drinking on a college education. The first Harvard Study was published in December 1983 exposing the harmful impact of drinking on a college education. What students had long known, but were not inclined to admit, was now being statistically proven. Drinking by college students had a significant negative affect on academic performance. In the midst of the issues, Brockport students attempted to adjust and revise their practices in hope of preserving the nineteen year age drinking standard. SASU (the SUNY student union) representatives from most campuses, including Brockport, appealed to the state legislature not to further raise the drinking age. Stu Freidman, the Brockport representative, explained the consequences the law would have on college students. Student publications and activities attempted to diffuse the controversy by showing that a new level of responsibility was already being demonstrated. “Student Alcohol Use on Decline” read one headline in the *Stylus*. [36] In order to mitigate the situation, other stories focused on changing drinking practices while also demonstrating that drinking problems were not exclusive to the college community. “DWI arrests up in town, campus numbers down”, read another *Stylus* headline [37] attempting to dissuade legal changes. One thing that was beyond their control was that laws are passed that are applicable to all of society. Since college students did not even comprise the entire population of young people in the 19 to 21 year old age group, they were unable to stop legislative reform. On December 10, 1985 New York joined 47 other states at the time with a legal drinking age of twenty-one years.

COLLEGE LIFE: A NEW AGE AT SUNY BROCKPORT

The new twenty-one year age drinking law resulted in many changes at colleges and universities throughout New York. Alcohol was no longer available on campus. Students could

only get alcoholic beverages at off campus locations. At SUNY Brockport the transition had extensive impact on college social life. Student surveys were circulated by BSG requesting student feedback and suggestions concerning campus activities. Overwhelmingly, the responses indicated that students felt that drinking was an integral part of college social life. Suggestions, however, revealed that students were resigned to adapting to the reality of the new law.

To promote an eclectic social life on campus, BSG and school administrators implemented new activities and venues with no drinking. A new night club premiered for weekend socials featuring music and dancing. The club, located on the top floor of the Brockway Dining Hall, was met with student enthusiasm and attendance. “None of the patrons seemed too affected by the lack of alcohol and attendance was not strictly limited to an underage crowd”, stated a review in the *Stylus*.^[38] Other events that used to feature alcohol enjoyed similar student participation and cooperation.

Brockport, like many other colleges, experienced changes in its facilities as well as its policies. Despite student efforts to keep it open, the *Rathskeller* fell victim to changing laws and practices by the fall of 1983. The “Off the Tracks” late night snack bar in the basement of Harrison Hall removed draught beer from its offerings in response to new laws and pressures. SUNY Brockport’s alcohol policy changed to coincide with state law. Kegs and other large containers were prohibited from campus. An editorial in the *Stylus* stated: “If schools are going to make the new rules work, they need to provide alternative social activities”.^[39]

At the time of transition to the twenty-one drinking age these alternative activities were well entrenched in campus life at Brockport. The campus newspaper accentuated these activities in its advertising and began to feature review articles on alternatives in a style similar to bar reviews that had appeared a few years earlier. “The campus coffee house offers a casual social

setting for those who lament the demise of the *Rathskeller*. Students have the opportunity to see first-hand that they don't have to drink to enjoy an active social life at Brockport.”[40]

As the 1980's inched close to the new decade, the spirit of cooperation and accepting alternate social events began to wane at Brockport. There had always been a core of students insistent upon drinking in spite of new age requirements and laws. By 1988-89 either many students had grown tired of non-alcoholic events or the core drinkers had persuaded their peers that illegal drinking was acceptable and preferable.

An underground atmosphere of drinking was replacing overt efforts to have students remain alcohol free. Students brought alcohol into their dormitories without fear of consequences for breaking the college's alcohol policy. The reason that they did not respect the law or the policy probably resulted from lack of enforcement and corresponding punishment. “Unless the drinking was accompanied by other behavioral problems, campus security and administrators did not make much of underage drinking on campus.”[41] In most instances underage drinking was not extensive enough to cause serious problems. Reports from that time refer to incidents of noise and disruptiveness and minor property damage in the dorms. Problems were usually left to residential administrators for resolution.

By the late 80's a trend of extensive drinking was emerging among students at Brockport and colleges nationwide. Today this practice is referred to as 'binge drinking' or drinking only for the purpose of getting drunk. This practice was most prominent among students who possessed fake ID cards and patronized village bars and who then sought out 'after hours' parties off campus for the purpose of drinking even more. This led to problems of rowdiness and vandalism in village neighborhoods featuring such parties. The consequences of these activities and practices was that village residents demanded action from their local police. The result was a dramatic rise in arrests for public intoxication by Brockport Village Police. Public officials dealt

with the most severe cases of college drinking and were persistent in reducing the problems.

Illegal drinking in the Village of Brockport was serious and could result in major legal problems for those who were caught.

Excessive drinking, however, has consequences far beyond legal issues. Eventually this type of drinking results in social and health problems. Of more serious concern to college students, however, is the affect of drinking on academic studies. The first Harvard Alcohol Study from 1983, demonstrated the link between academic problems and alcohol abuse. “Frequent drinkers were 56% more likely to experience major memory lapses or 48% more likely to fall behind in their studies.”[42]

Brockport has experienced many of the same patterns characteristic to the entire college population. The evolution of binge drinking has resulted in the same problems as have been found at other schools. One of those problems, and a fairly recent one at that, is the emergence of hostile behavior by students who abuse alcohol. In this area, too, Brockport is not unique. Just as it is at other schools, hostile behavior resulting from excessive drinking is a serious problem at Brockport.

Thomas J. Hernandez, Director of the campus Counseling Center at Brockport believes “hostile behavior by student drinkers is the greatest concern facing the college alcohol issue in the 1990’s”[43] Hernandez also cites sexual assaults, property damage, and classroom disruptions as other growing problems emerging from alcohol abusing students at Brockport. Although there may be deeper underlying causes to hostile behaviors, “alcohol is the fuel which fires the misconduct”.[44]

Concern for academic performance suffering as a result of drinking patterns is also present at SUNY Brockport. Deteriorating academics are not a new concern with student drinkers, as was demonstrated by the Harvard Study. However, the intervening years have enabled analysts

to study the consequences in greater detail. Once again, consequences of alcohol abuse at Brockport parallel the serious results at other schools.

At Brockport 90% of students admit to drinking during the school year. This compares to a national average of 84% among college students. Brockport students also acknowledge that alcohol use has resulted in missed classes by 26% of drinkers, unplanned sexual activity by 17%, and vandalism or property damage by 14% of drinkers.[45] A report compiled by Brockport Student Health Services cites an inverse correlation between drinks consumed by students and grades earned. Students with the highest grade point averages consume the least alcohol while those with the lowest grades drink the most.[46]

Are these statistics an indictment of drinking laws and college policies that force students into covert behaviors? Hernandez thinks that they are the result of the recent period of alcohol policy at SUNY Brockport.[47] While he advocates adherence to the law and college policy, he recognizes the strain that these rules put on college life at Brockport.

College drinking will continue to be a major issue facing young students at Brockport for years to come. As long as students continue to view drinking as a 'right-of-passage', alcohol consumption will remain a major part of college life at SUNY Brockport.

The continuing importance of the college drinking issue once again caught the public's attention as this report was being prepared for the printer. After years of prohibiting underage drinking at Brockport, campus officials have revised their policy to provide clear consequences for those who violate it. "Brockport gets tough on drinking" declared recent *Democrat & Chronicle* headlines putting students and the community on notice that "underage drinking will not be tolerated". The new policy requires notification of parents following the first time an underage student is caught drinking, and expulsion from campus housing following a second offense. SUNY Brockport remains adamant that student drinking is an important college issue.

END NOTES

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Drinking by American college students has gained the attention of parents, government officials, and the media, among others as the practice has reached new levels in the 1990's. Newspaper, magazine and broadcast reports have publicized the more shocking aspects of college drinking in recent years. These articles and reports deal with the issue on a national level, using specific cases to validate their position. These articles are useful in analyzing college drinking at Brockport since they offer a greater statistical analysis which can serve as a national norm by which to compare. These reports are also easy to locate since they are indexed in most library catalogs.

In order to even make a comparison between SUNY Brockport and the national college average, of course, the local analysis must be pursued first. In evaluating this task, I considered conducting personal interviews with a number of Brockport alumni who were students during the periods of analysis. However, it would require a large number of interviews of this sort to gain anything more than anecdotal information. Therefore, I felt more traditional, yet time consuming, research would be necessary to gain useful analysis.

Since this report is primarily concerned with college life at Brockport and the role student drinking plays in that life, the source which most closely monitors it is the campus newspaper, the *Stylus*. The Drake Library on campus has two sets of the *Stylus* dating back to 1914. The challenge of using the college newspaper to prepare a historical report is that it is not indexed cumulatively by subject. This means that researchers must spend a great deal of time pouring through old issues.

Since one copy of the *Stylus* is on microfilm, I chose to use it to avoid handling, and thus risking further wear, to the bound newsprint copies of the newspapers in the College Archives. Searching microfilm copies of a newspaper also has several additional advantages. The search is

faster, since the microfilm machines advance pages for viewer scanning at a rate faster than would be possible by manually turning pages. If photo copies of articles are desired the microfilm is the only version which is available to copy. Since I chose to copy many articles for further evaluation in preparing my report, using the microfilm version of the *Stylus* was the most expedient for me.

Stylus articles are the most accurate information available to study college life at Brockport. They reflect both timely factual information and the perspective of student reporters who experienced college life in that era. The emphasis on college life, disqualifies other newspapers from being a consistently useful source. In most instances the Brockport Village newspapers and the daily papers from Rochester reported events as they related to the larger community. Those publications are useful when college life becomes a concern of that community.

Beyond the campus newspaper I found other school publications useful since they contain official policies and other information directly relevant to college life at Brockport. Interviews with campus officials, especially those with many years at Brockport, were very helpful. There is a great deal of information to be gained, but also, an insight that can be helpful in analyzing the tremendous quantity of information gathered from the *Stylus*

The insights gained from interviews when combined with the multitude of information gathered from the school paper enable a researcher to identify the significance of alcohol consumption on college life. When pouring through the *Stylus*, there is a definite perception that drinking is an important part of college life at Brockport. This perception comes from the vast quantity of articles and advertisements about drinking that are part of the newspaper. Campus officials are often able to add greater insight into specific articles or about particular events. The combination of these sources enables researchers to identify the real significance of the issue of college drinking and its impact on college life at Brockport.